

the Administration for supporting this bill, and for working so extensively with our offices as we sought to come to a common agreement. I particularly wish to thank Susan Jacobs, Mike Dennis, Alexandra Arriaga, and David Killian for the many hours and hard work they graciously devoted to negotiations on this bill. I commend Senator NICKLES for his great leadership and for his will to work in such a bipartisan way.

This bill also would not have happened without the support of many groups, representing people of many faiths. The Episcopal Church was the first to support the bill, leading the charge on behalf of their brothers and sisters of faith suffering in Sudan, Pakistan, and around the world. I particularly wish to thank their representatives Tom Hart and Jere Skipper, whose great dedication and unflagging effort were critical in rallying widespread support for this bill. I ask unanimous consent to enter the powerful statement of the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the Most Reverend Frank T. Griswold into the RECORD. True to its proud tradition defending human rights, the American Jewish Committee also led the charge from the beginning, particularly Rich Foltin who spent long hours working on this bill.

The Christian Coalition was another critical and outspoken supporter, and I particularly wish to mention the hard work of Jeff Taylor, director of the Washington Office. The Southern Baptists, who are headquartered in my district, also have members suffering persecution around the world. Will Dodson of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission provided essential support and encouragement. The United States Catholic Conference provided critical help, through Cynthia Phillips and several other representatives. The Ant-Defamation League, particularly Stacy Burdett, broadened and rallied support, true to its historical defense of victims of persecution. There are many others who have provided critical help, including Chuck Colson, head of Justice Fellowship, Nagy Kheir of the American Coptic Association and many others. To all of these, I say thank you.

Two years ago, we unanimously passed a resolution condemning Christian persecution worldwide, a resolution I was proud to cosponsor. The International Religious Freedom Act admirably implements those principles. It is comprehensive, far-reaching and tough. Yet it is carefully designed to craft policies individually for each country, addressing the sad truth that persecuting regimes have developed great sophistication and variety in their methods of oppression.

Let me briefly address the cornerstones of this bill. First, it establishes a high-level Ambassador at Large who will forcefully advocate for religious freedom around the world. It establishes a high-level, independent Commission of experts to provide policy recommendations. We hope for the kind of great work that the State Department Advisory Committee, under the able leadership of John Shattuck and Alex Arriaga, have provided so far.

Secondly, every year the State Department will report on the status of religious freedom around the world, and on the actions our government has taken to combat violations of that freedom. In the tradition of the Human Rights Report, the Annual Report on International Religious Freedom will shed the light of exposure on religious persecution.

Third, every year our government must take action in each country where violations occur. This is the essential core of the bill. We provide a vast number of options to address the persecution, from diplomatic discussions to targeted economic sanctions. We know that each country and each situation is different, and this bill acknowledges that strategic reality.

In every country where particularly severe violations occur, each year our government will have to take stronger action. This action is geared to create the greatest possible leverage for change in the behaviour of persecuting regimes. Prior to imposing any sanction, the President must first seek an agreement for change with the foreign country. He must consult with religious groups and others who best know the country to devise the best possible measure. He must also consult with United States business interests to fully weigh any unintended economic risk to the United States. The President has the flexibility, if necessary, to waive economic actions because they might be harmful to the persecuted people, or because another important national US interest requires it.

Finally, there is extensive long-term promotion of change in this bill—from broadcasting to awards for foreign service officers who promote religious freedom. And we require training on human rights and on conditions of religious persecution around the world, for all those who might be faced with cases of such persecution directly, from Ambassadors to foreign service officers to immigration officers.

Mr. Speaker, this bill promotes wise, long-term change. As Senator NICKLES has said, this bill is not designed to punish but to change behavior. The International Religious Freedom Act is comprehensive and strong but it is calibrated, flexible and responsible. The only option it does not allow is silence.

Long ago, in times of terrible hardship for the people of God, the prophet Isaiah said that what is acceptable to God is "to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free". Mr. Speaker, this is not just a bill. This is a stand for the most precious freedom, the right dearest to every human heart. This is a historic stand for the freedom of the people of God in every country to worship Him in freedom and in truth.

Mr. Speaker, I urge each of my colleagues to join with the Senate in saying to the world, with one voice, that the United States stands for freedom of religion in every country, for every people, for every man and woman. We cannot be silent.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH CENTER,
NEW YORK, NY,
September 29, 1998.

OPEN LETTER TO CONGRESS CONCERNING
RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION ABROAD

DEAR MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE: I have recently returned from a once-a-decade meeting of all Anglican bishops around the world known as the Lambeth Conference. Nearly 750 bishops from every Church of the Anglican Communion, of which the Episcopal Church in the United States is one, met for three weeks to worship, learn, and discuss issues of our experience in God's world. One of the inescapable and profoundly moving realities of the Lambeth Conference is the diversity of experience, of background, of culture, which characterizes the world's 70 million Anglicans, representing 165 countries. I returned to the United States challenged and stretched by stories of differing circumstances and divergent view points.

This amazing richness of experience and faith within the Anglican family causes me to appreciate once again the richness of all faiths here in the United States. While I have chosen a path in the Anglican tradition of Christianity, I celebrate the rich diversity enjoyed in this country, and the freedom that we have to practice our faith. Another lesson learned at the Lambeth Conference was that these freedoms which we so easily take for granted do not exist in many parts of the world. Stories of religious intolerance, restrictions, persecution, and even murder jolted bishops from the West to the stark reality of people's suffering for what they believe.

Bishops from Sudan, our fastest growing church in the world, told how their believers have suffered torture and enslavement. Food and medicine are used to coerce Christians to renounce their faith. Fear of genocide and systematic persecution have forced thousands of people into refugee camps. In Pakistan, Anglicans are often beaten, their churches and villages raided, while women are raped and kidnapped. These and other stories moved the Lambeth Conference to call on governments around the world to "strive for creation of just and free conditions for people of all religions to practice their beliefs." Today, I call on you.

I commend the work of so many in Congress for raising religious persecution abroad before our government and the nation at large. Legislation in both the House and Senate has served to heighten awareness and concern for those around the world who suffer for their faith. Now, it is time to finish the job.

I believe the compromise legislation designed by Senators Nickles and Lieberman takes a positive and meaningful step in the cause of religious liberty worldwide. The Nickles-Lieberman bill requires the Administration to take one of a broad range of options currently available under U.S. law—from private diplomatic protest to certain economic sanctions—to respond to countries that engage in religious persecution. The bill asks the State Department to report on the wide range of religious intolerance experienced worldwide. It requires consultation with religious communities, both here and abroad, prior to any action to ensure that any U.S. response will help, not harm, the religious minority on the ground. It gives the Administration a flexible, case-by-case response, because one response cannot fit all circumstances. I believe this is a moderate, flexible response to human rights abuses that strikes the right balance between imposing inflexible sanctions and overlooking serious human rights abuses.

The West cannot impose its way of doing things on other parts of the world. Different conditions require different actions. I do not make this call for religious freedom as a way of imposing our ideals on a resistant world. I carry this message to you as a clear call from our brother and sister Anglicans and other people of faith abroad. I hope that you and I can be faithful to that call.

Thank you for your fullest consideration of this legislation.

Yours sincerely,
THE MOST REV. FRANK T. GRISWOLD,
Presiding Bishop and Primate.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DEBORAH PRYCE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 16, 1998

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, during the week of October 12, 1998, I was absent

due to an illness in my family. I received an official leave of absence from the Majority Leader in this regard.

However, had I been present, I would have voted in the following manner on the following legislation:

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1998

H.R. 3494—Child Protection and Sexual Predator Punishment Act: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Agree to the Senate Amendments (Roll Call No. 521) Aye.

H. Con. Res. 350—Calling Upon the President to Respond to the Significant Increase in Steel Imports: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Agree (Roll Call No. 522) Aye.

S. 2095—National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Establishment Act: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended (Roll Call No. 523) Aye.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1998

H. Res. 494—Expressing the Sense of the House of Representatives that the U.S. has enjoyed the loyalty of the U.S. citizens of Guam: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Agree (Roll Call No. 524) Aye.

S. 1364—Federal Reports Elimination Act of 1998: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended (Roll Call No. 525) Aye.

H.R. 4756—The Year 2000 Preparedness Act of 1998: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended (Roll Call No. 526) Aye.

S. 1754—The Health Professions Education Partnership Act: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended (Roll Call No. 527) Aye.

S. 1260—The Securities Litigation Uniform Standards Act: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Agree to the Conference Report (Roll Call No. 528) Aye.

S. 1722—The Women's Health Research and Prevention Amendments: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass (Roll Call No. 529) Aye.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1998

H.R. 3963—Sell Canyon Ferry Reservoir Cabins: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended (Roll Call No. 530) Aye.

H.R. 559—Add Bronchiolo-Alveolar Carcinoma to Service-connected Diseases: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass (Roll Call No. 531) Aye.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1998

H. Res. 598—Steel Imports: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass (Roll Call No. 532) Aye.

S. 1733—To require the Commissioner of Social Security and Food Stamp Agencies to take certain actions to ensure that food stamp coupons are not issued for deceased individuals: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass (Roll Call No. 533) Aye.

S. 2133—To preserve the cultural resources of Route 66 Corridor: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass (Roll Call No. 534) Aye.

S. 1132—Bandelier National Monument Administrative Improvement and Watershed Protection Act: Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass (Roll Call No. 535) Aye.

HONORING REV. DR. RICHARD H. DIXON, JR.

HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 16, 1998

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to tender my congratulations to a man of the cloth who has served his congregation at the Macedonia Baptist Church for forty years.

The Reverend Dr. Richard H. Dixon, Jr. has accomplished much for his church in those

decades. He was one of four children born to the late Rev. Richard and Beulah Dixon. He received his Doctor of Divinity degree from the University of Detroit and is a candidate for a doctorate from Princeton Theological Seminary.

During his years at Macedonia Baptist, the church built a 75-unit Senior Citizen Complex, purchased the Macedonia Community Center, established the Collin Allen Day Care Center, and formed the church credit union which has helped congregants to buy homes and send their children to school.

He and his wife, Earnestine Wright Dixon, have three children and four grandchildren. Mrs. Dixon has also served her community faithfully and well. She has served as an officer of four separate PTAs, is currently president of the Church Women United, and is a member of the Board for Mount Vernon Council of Churches.

The Rev. Dixon is also someone I have had a close and growing relationship with over the past years. I consider him a friend and advisor. He has graciously invited me to his home and I was delighted to have attended family events.

The depth of the contribution these two wonderful people have made to their community can hardly be measured. I join the church and the city in congratulating Rev. Dr. Dixon for his forty years of giving.

HONORING HMONG AND LAO COMBAT VETERANS

HON. JIM RAMSTAD

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 16, 1998

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Speaker, during this 105th Congress, I was honored to join many of my colleagues, as well as other distinguished U.S. officials, in participating in the first national recognition ceremony to honor the valor and sacrifice of Hmong and Lao combat veterans in the Vietnam War.

Many people from my home state of Minnesota, and from around the nation, organized and participated in the important events, which were held at the Vietnam War Memorial and the Arlington National Cemetery.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank a number of people from Minnesota and across the United States who made the national events honoring the Hmong veterans possible, including Major General Vang Pao, Colonel Wangyee Vang, Chertzong Vang, Chong Bee Vang, Ying Vang and Philip Smith.

Over a thousand Hmong veterans and their families traveled from Minnesota to Washington, DC, to participate in this historic ceremony.

I am proud that two of the largest Hmong non-profit organizations serving their communities in Minnesota, the Lao Family Community of Minnesota, Inc. and the Lao Veterans of America organization, played a leadership role in organizing and participating in this unprecedented event. They have helped bring long-overdue honor and recognition to the Hmong and Lao veterans and their families, as well as to educate policy makers and the American people about the critical wartime sacrifices of the Hmong and Lao combat veterans.

William Branigin from the Washington Post wrote an important article about the event that I would like to insert into the RECORD. (insert: Washington Post article Thursday, May 15, 1997).

Mr. Speaker, once again, I heartily applaud these distinguished Hmong and Lao combat veterans for their sacrifices.

RECOGNIZING U.S. ALLIES IN 'SECRET WAR'— 'LONG OVERDUE' HONORS GO TO HMONG, LAO VETS

Twenty-two years ago this month, the predominantly Hmong recruits of America's "secret war" in Laos began a protracted and painful exodus from their homeland as communist forces seized power.

Yesterday, some 3,000 Hmong and Lao veterans and their families gathered at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to receive congressional recognition for the first time, and then marched across the Potomac to commemorate their fateful crossing of the Mekong River into permanent exile.

Clad in jungle camouflage fatigues, flight suits and other uniforms, the veterans stood in formation on the Mall as speakers ranging from serving members of Congress to retired CIA station chiefs paid tribute to their courage and sacrifice in unsung service of the United States. Among those in attendance were former Special Forces officers, pilots of the top-secret Ravens unit and civilian officials from the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations.

It was a day of what a congressional commendation described as "long overdue recognition" of the CIA-funded army's role in protecting sensitive U.S. installations, rescuing downed American pilots and holding off tens of thousands of North Vietnamese troops who might otherwise have been thrown into combat against U.S. forces.

But it was also a day of atonement for the United States. For in honoring the ethnic Hmong tribal people and Laotians who made up the bulk of the 40,000-member clandestine force, participants in the ceremony acknowledged that America had betrayed them, breaking long-standing promises and abandoning them to bloody reprisals by Lao and Vietnamese communist forces in which untold thousands died.

"There is a real feeling among many people who served there that the Hmong were betrayed," said Philip Smith, the Washington director of Lao Veterans of America, which represents about 40,000 Hmong and Lao veterans and family members. "Many commitments were made to them in the field that were then forgotten in Washington."

Among those who received the Vietnam Veterans National Medal and a congressional citation yesterday was Nor Pao Lor, a disabled 61-year-old Hmong who served in the secret army for 13 years and then spent four more years fighting in the jungles of Laos until forced to flee across the Mekong River to Thailand on a bamboo raft. He then spent eight years in a Thai refugee camp before being accepted for resettlement in the United States. He now lives in Wisconsin.

"We felt very sorry that maybe America forgot us," he said as he stood with a crutch near dozens of his disabled comrades. "It was very painful for us."

As a lieutenant in the army led by Gen. Vang Pao, who was also present yesterday, Nor Pao Lor was wounded three times while defending Lima Site 85, a top-secret U.S. base that was used to direct airstrikes against targets in North Vietnam. Described by historians as perhaps the most critical intelligence-gathering site in South-east Asia during the Vietnam War, Lima Site 85 was linked directly to the White House under President Lyndon B. Johnson until the base fell to North Vietnamese troops in 1968.